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Atlantan to lead federal nonprofit

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Atlantan Frank B. Strickland has been named chairman of a \$339 million federal nonprofit agency that funds and oversees civil legal aid for America's poor. Strickland, a partner at the local law firm Strickland Brockington Lewis LLP, was appointed by President George W. Bush in late April to head Legal Services Corp. (LSC), a congressionally chartered nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Strickland has served on the board of the nonprofit Georgia Legal Services program for more than six years. He replaces LSC's outgoing board chairman, Douglas Eakeley, the longest-serving chairman in the agency's history, on the board since 1993.

"It's not at all surprising that President Bush chose [Strickland] to serve," said Eric Kleiman, an LSC spokesperson. "Who better to lead the national legal services program than an advocate who has been working in the trenches for more than six years as a leader of one of the most highly regarded federal legal-aid grantees (the Georgia Legal Services Program)?"

"He is acutely aware that 80 percent of poor Americans cannot obtain legal assistance when they need it, and he knows that it his job -- and that of his 10 colleagues on the board -- to strategize and devise enterprising solutions to this problem."

The appointment of Strickland -- "a compassionate conservative in the truest sense" -- to LSC board chairman will be a win-win for both Atlanta and America, Kleiman added. "His chairmanship will ensure that low-income Atlanta residents with legal problems have a voice at the highest level of the federal government," he said. "It will also ensure that LSC furthers its reputation as a bipartisan institution of which members of both political parties can be proud.

"I think it absolutely says something about Atlanta's commitment to its least fortunate that the one leader chosen from throughout the nation to lead the institution dedicated to 'justice for all' is from right in your own back yard."

The Atlantan's bipartisan approach also should help convince Congress that more funds are needed, and that LSC will be a responsible steward of any additional dollars allocated, Kleiman said.

In February, Congress approved the first funding increase (\$9.5 million) for LSC in three years. The agency's current appropriation is \$339 million, with a budget request of \$353 million to Congress for fiscal year 2004.